



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Mount Lewis Field Office

50 Bastian Road

Battle Mountain, NV 89820

<http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en.html>

SEP 02 2010



In Reply Refer To:
LLNVB0000 (4700)

Dear Reader:

The Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Callaghan Complex and New Pass/Ravenswood Herd Management Area (HMA) Wild Horse Gather (EA) DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2010-0087-EA will be available for your review and comment on September 2, 2010. The document may be viewed on-line at http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field_office.html. Hard copies are available from the Mount Lewis Field Office.

The EA analyzes the potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects to the human environment associated with completion of a gather to treat as many wild mares as possible in these HMAs as well as to remove a minimal number of excess wild horses in the Callaghan, Bald Mountain, Rocky Hills, (Callaghan Complex) and New Pass/Ravenswood HMAs. Should a determination be made that implementation of the Proposed Action or alternative actions would not result in "significant environmental impacts" a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be prepared to document that determination, and a Decision Record issued providing the rationale for approving the chosen alternative.

The Mount Lewis Field Office (MLFO) is proposing to conduct a wild horse gather to apply fertility control to mares and remove excess wild horses from the Callaghan Complex and New Pass/Ravenswood HMA, and, beginning around December 1, 2010. The objective of the gather would be to gather approximately 80% of the existing populations and treat all mares released back to the HMAs with the fertility control vaccine PZP-22. Approximately 866 horses would be gathered and 221 horses removed. Weanlings, some yearlings and wild horses captured from outside HMA boundaries would be removed; however animals of any age could be removed to meet the gather objectives. It is estimated that the current population within these HMAs is 1,083 horses based on aerial inventories conducted in September 2009. The post gather goal would be for approximately 862 wild horses to remain within these HMAs after the proposed gather.

Animals removed would be transported to a BLM holding facility and be prepared for adoption, Long Term Holding Pastures (LTHPs) or sale. It is estimated that most of the wild horses removed would be young and highly adoptable, with few horses needing to be maintained in LTHPs. Approximately 80% of the existing population would remain on the range after the gather.

The New Pass/Ravenswood HMA was last gathered in November 2007, and the Callaghan Complex in December 2008 and January 2009. Both of these gathers involved inoculation of the mares with fertility control vaccine. By gathering these HMAs in 2010 before the population has greatly exceeded AML, and re-treating these mares with fertility control, the BLM hopes to continue to slow population growth, maintain wild horse population levels below the established AML, and reduce or eliminate the numbers of wild horses that would need to be removed from the range in future years, particularly older animals that would have to be maintained in LTHPs.

The proposed gather area is located approximately 55 miles south of Battle Mountain in Lander County, Nevada. The combined acreage of the HMAs is approximately 640,000 acres. The AML range for these HMAs is 894-1,161 wild horses.

The Callaghan Complex and New Pass/Ravenswood HMA wild horse gather is needed to:

- slow population growth, and maintain population size within AML,
- remove wild horses from outside of HMA boundaries,
- reduce the number of wild horses that would be removed and placed in short or long-term holding or the adoption and sale programs through future gathers,
- protect rangeland resources from deterioration associated with an overpopulation of wild horses, and
- maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship on the public lands consistent with the provisions of Section 3(b) (2) of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (WFRHBA).

By maintaining a population consistent with the established AML, progress would be made towards achievement of Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Standards for Rangeland Health. Please refer to the EA for more detail about these HMAs and the proposed wild horse gather.

This Preliminary EA is being provided to the interested public for review for 30 days. We welcome your comments and highly encourage you to submit comments, issues, alternatives, recommendations, or other input for inclusion into the Final EA. Comments will be accepted until **October 2, 2010**. In order to provide meaningful input, please submit comments that are applicable to the proposed wild horse gather, referencing the Preliminary EA where possible.

Interested individuals should mail written comments to the BLM Mount Lewis Field Office, 50 Bastian Road, Battle Mountain, NV, 89820, attention Doug Furtado, Field Manager. Comments may also be provided through e-mail to this address: callaghan_newpass_gather@blm.gov. Be advised that *only* the comments received by postal mail or to this specific e-mail address will be considered in the completion of the Final EA, Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision. The 2007 New Pass/Ravenswood HMA EA and 2008 Callaghan Complex EA will also be posted on BLM's website at http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field/blm_information/national_environmental.html for the public's information.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. If you would rather not remain on the mailing list for the Callaghan Complex or New Pass/Ravenswood HMA wild horse gather, and do not wish to receive subsequent documents, please submit your request in writing to the Mount Lewis Field Office.

All comments received during the public comment period will be fully considered and evaluated for preparation of the Final EA. If you have any questions, please contact Shawna Richardson, Mount Lewis Field Office Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, at (775) 635-4181.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Douglas W. Furtado', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Douglas W. Furtado
Field Manager,
Mount Lewis Field Office